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## The glass ceiling for women in business

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PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS THESIS:  
THE GLASS CEILING FOR WOMEN IN  
BUSINESS

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# INTRODUCTION

The problem that has no name — which is simply the fact that American women are kept from growing to their full human capacities — is taking a far greater toll on the physical and mental health of our country than any known disease.

-Betty Friedan

I love to see a young girl go out and grab the world by the lapels. Life's a bitch. You've got to go out and kick ass.

-Maya Angelou

I have yet to hear a man ask for advice on how to combine marriage and a career.

-Gloria Steinem

We've got a generation now who were born with semiequality. They don't know how it was before, so they think, this isn't too bad. We're working. We have our attaché cases and our three-piece suits. I get very disgusted with the younger generation of women. We had a torch to pass, and they are just sitting there. They don't realize it can be taken away. Things are going to have to get worse before they join in fighting the battle.

-Erma Bombeck

What better inspiration for research on the glass ceiling than the words of such influential women. As a young woman who will soon graduate college and enter the business world, in a field still dominated by men, the glass ceiling was a natural choice for my Presidential Scholar's research. When I first heard mention of the topic, it sounded like an age-old concept; one that was no longer in the public perception for the simple fact that it no longer existed. All my life, I have been led to believe that as a woman I can do anything, and that there will be nothing in my way besides the limitations I place on myself. While I would love for this to be true, the research I have conducted has led me to think otherwise. This research took several forms. In terms of secondary research, I reviewed articles written on the topic. I then conducted my own primary research by surveying a group of women and finally by conducting a series of interviews with four fascinating and open-minded women, all of whom, it seems, hit their own glass ceiling and managed to break through.

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The leading source of information on women in business is Catalyst, a nonprofit research organization. According to their 2002 Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners, women currently represent 15.7 percent of corporate officers in Fortune 500 companies, which is up from 12.5 percent in 2000 (Catalyst). Although this research holds promise, other findings suggest that women are still underpaid when compared to their male colleagues. Catalyst found that almost 95 percent of the top earning corporate officers are men, with women comprising the remaining five percent (Catalyst).

Other studies conducted by Catalyst in the financial services industry shed light on the attitudes and perceptions of working men and women. They found that, although roughly equal amounts of women and men were satisfied with their current employers, 74 percent and 77 percent, respectively, differences do arise when other levels of satisfaction are measured. For example, 65 percent of women report that women have to work harder than men to get the same rewards but only 13 percent of men agree with that statement. In addition, 51 percent of women stated that they feel women are paid less than men for doing similar work and only 8 percent of men agreed. Lastly, half of all men surveyed believed that a woman's opportunities to advance to senior leadership in their firms have increased greatly over the past five years, but a mere 18 percent of women felt this way.

This study also pointed out several barriers women face when attempting advancement. Some of these are:

- ❖ **Lack of mentoring opportunities.** Since women still comprise such a small percentage of senior management, there are few opportunities for mentoring and assistance to lower-level women looking to move up the ranks.
- ❖ **Exclusion from informal networks of communication.** Many companies' formal and informal networking opportunities are still associated primarily with men (e.g. golf meetings, etc.)

- ❖ **Stereotyping and preconceptions of women's roles and abilities.**
- ❖ **Work/life concerns** such as commitment to personal and family responsibilities.

In addition to the facts provided primarily by Catalyst, there are many opinions and perceptions in the business world about the issue of the glass ceiling. According to an article by Toddi Gutner published in *Business Week* last September, there are two camps among women professionals. First, there are women who say gender is irrelevant and that the only thing that matters is performance. Other women argue that gender is still an issue and that barriers to success do exist to a significant extent. According to Shelly Lazarus, one of only a handful of female CEOs, "The opportunity is there for women to go as far as they want to go in the business world, but women must believe they can reach the top—otherwise, they won't want to make the necessary sacrifices" (Gutner).

Supplementary research has been conducted regarding how qualified women actually are to be the leaders of their companies. This research has conclusively shown that women consistently out-rank men in terms of their capabilities in this area. For example, an article in a November 2000 issue of *Newsweek* stated that:

"By and large, the studies show that women executives, when rated by their peers, underlings, and bosses, score higher than their male counterparts on a wide variety of measures—from producing high-quality work to goal-setting and mentoring employees. Using elaborate performance evaluations of execs, researchers found that women got higher ratings than men on almost every skill measured" ("As Leaders, Women Rule").

In addition, Douglas Elix, the head of IBM's Global Services Division, is later quoted as saying that instead of being motivated by self-interest, women are more driven by "what they can do for the company" (qtd in "As Leaders, Women Rule").

Other studies have shown that women's long-recognized skills of teamwork and interpersonal communication will further help them in this Information Age. However, opponents were quick to point out that it may be those very skills that are detrimental to

women's efforts to advance. As the survey and interviews will show, many women have felt the need to act more "like men" in order to be successful. This seems to indicate that the strengths that seemed so valuable in the above studies may indeed be disadvantageous to women in the real world. This may come as no surprise to some in the business world, as assumptions abound that people skills, though admittedly important, are not business skills ("As Leaders, Women Rule"). The implications of these ideas are far-reaching. For example, they could imply that a woman superior who takes the time to consult her staff before making a decision would be seen as weak and unable to take a stand.

This type of contradictory information leaves women with few options. They may act in traditionally feminine ways, such as by taking on the role of the caring, team-oriented boss. They may do so knowing that these skills are being increasingly valued. However, they may also reach the understanding that these skills will actually hinder their chances of advancement and they may make a complete turnaround, behaving assertively, aggressively, and decisively. This doesn't seem to be the answer, either. Take Ann Hopkins, a one-time manager at Price Waterhouse whose sexual discrimination case against the company later ended up in the Supreme Court. Hopkins, a mother of three who was labeled "difficult to work with," was also given evaluations from partners at the firm calling her "macho, foulmouthed, and harsh to co-workers" (Lacayo). Unbelievably, she was also told by a partner she considered a supporter that she might improve her chances of retaining her job if she learned to walk, talk, and dress "more femininely...wear makeup, have her hair styled and wear jewelry" (qtd. in Lacayo). According to Herma Hill Kay, a sex-discrimination expert at the University of California, Berkeley, as quoted in an article in *Time* in the late eighties, "Men in fields that have long been dominated by males tend to expect women to act both feminine and businesslike. I think they don't realize they're sending out conflicting



messages” (Lacayo). Although this statement was made nearly 15 years ago, it still rings true. Whether we act “feminine” or “masculine,” we are left with little room for error and little understanding of the best ways of doing business.

The combination of this confusion and lack of opportunity has resulted in many women bailing out of corporate America in order to start their own businesses. While this may be a partial explanation for the lack of female executives, it also provides valuable insight into the frustration of many businesswomen. Tired of facing inflexible work schedules that don’t allow for family commitments and frustrated with never-ending barriers to advancement, many women are unwilling to devote years of their lives to unfulfilling and unhappy positions. They are instead leaving in droves to start their own businesses.

According to an article in *Industry Week*, for the last ten years or so women have launched businesses at twice the rate of men. According to Sheila Wellington, president of Catalyst in 1998, “Women leave larger companies because they are pushed and pulled. They are pulled by a good idea, but pushed by a glass ceiling or another powerful reason” (Royal). In a study conducted by Catalyst in the same year, women defined the glass ceiling as: their contributions were not recognized or valued; they were not taken seriously; they were excluded from informal networks; or they were excluded from training opportunities. In addition, many women indicated that they felt isolated from corporate culture (Solomon). Given these feelings, it is easy to see why women are eager to leave corporate America.

In conclusion, although we may not hear about the glass ceiling on the nightly news, articles and research abound on the topic, indicating that it is as alive as ever. Additionally, many of the studies conducted indicate that women do indeed perceive a glass ceiling, or at the very least discrimination of some kind that limits their abilities to advance and succeed. The survey results and interviews that follow further support this notion.



## SURVEYS

On November 18, 2002, a survey was administered at a meeting of the Association of Professional and Business Women. The survey questions can be found in **Appendix B**, and the survey results, in table form, can be found in **Appendix C**. Although there were only ten survey respondents, the results still carry important implications.

At the onset, it is important to note the approximate ages of the survey respondents. Although they were not directly questioned as to their age, it appeared that the majority of the women were over the age of 45, with some much older than this. In this way, we would expect the survey results to be somewhat similar to the results of the interviews later conducted, as the interview subjects were also in this approximate age group.

Another important facet of the survey process was the way in which the survey was conducted. A series of statements were given and each respondent was asked to indicate their level of agreement with these statements, on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (see **Appendix B**). All statements were opinions and were not necessarily my own opinion; in some instances they were contradictory to what other research has indicated. The purpose of this was to ensure that respondents were actually reading the questions and not simply marking choices randomly.

The results of several key questions were particularly interesting (for complete survey results, see **Appendix C**). The first of the significant results was the overwhelming agreement with the first statement that the glass ceiling exists to a significant extent for women in business today. This does not come as much of a surprise, given that the respondents were a group of women who experience life as women in business everyday. None of the women disagreed with this statement, and nine out of ten responded in either

agreement or strong agreement (see **Appendix C**). This seems to indicate that, although the glass ceiling may not be as visible as it was in the last few decades, it does continue to exist to the extent that many women have experienced its presence first-hand.

Another notable result was the response to the third statement that the glass ceiling exists in the United States primarily because of culture. Seven out of ten respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This is in rough alignment with the responses of the interview subjects when asked a similar question.

Although it may seem obvious to some that culture has allowed the glass ceiling to perpetuate (what else could be to blame?), these results do carry further implications. They indicate that it does not seem to be employment laws or other hard and fast rules that are to blame. In my eyes, culture encompasses how women feel about their own limitations, within the context of our society, as well as how men may feel about limitations for women.

The idea that culture is primarily to blame for the continuing existence of the glass ceiling may mean that the ideals behind the glass ceiling are ingrained into the consciousness of our society, much like other forms of discrimination, such as racism or bias toward different sexual orientations. As we are unfortunately aware, racism has played a role in our culture for quite some time. It is doubtful that anyone could argue that the ideals and prejudice behind it have been completely eradicated. In a similar manner, the ideals of sexism have also existed for an extensive period of time and, if the results of this research are any indication, those ideals still exist. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that a significant amount of time is necessary to change the mindset of our society. This would seem to indicate that the glass ceiling might be around for some time to come.

Perhaps the most fascinating result of the survey was the response to statement number four, that women have been forced to “act like men” (i.e. assertive, aggressive,

independent) in order to overcome the obstacles of the glass ceiling. Again, seventy percent of respondents agreed with this statement. This is particularly interesting in light of the aforementioned research, which seemed to indicate that traditionally “feminine” traits such as a caring, nurturing attitude and good communication skills are becoming increasingly important as the workplace has gradually shifted away from a hierarchy and toward a more team-oriented environment. The agreement with this statement, both from the survey respondents and the interview subjects, strikes me as rather disappointing. It is distressing to think that women have been forced to act in a manner that, for some, may be unnatural and against our very nature. It is also discouraging that as women who are motivated to overcome the limitations of the glass ceiling, we have attempted to adopt these traits only to be labeled “the bitch” or some similarly unflattering term. If being “feminine” has left us limited and being “masculine” has left us ostracized, what is a woman to do?

In response to the previous three statements, the survey respondents had been largely in agreement. However, statement seven, that women who desire to achieve success must abandon goals of marriage and family, was met with significant disagreement. Responses ranged from strongly disagree to agree, with no clear majority. Before administering the survey, I had suspected that there would be more agreement with this statement, given that the survey was administered to a seemingly homogenous group of businesswomen. However, the reactions to this statement have proved that the institutions of marriage and family are so unique to each individual that it is impossible to construct a broad statement that can be true for any number of women.

Although the responses to this statement were slightly unexpected, they were somewhat hopeful. They seem to indicate that a woman *can* “have it all,” meaning a successful, fulfilling career and, at the same time, a healthy and fulfilling home life. Growing

up, some of us are taught that we can do anything, and to let no man hold us back. We are taught to go to whatever college we desire, set career goals as high as we want, and that if the men really want us, they'll follow. Others of us are taught that relationships are extremely important, and that our ability to have children is a wonderful responsibility and is more important than anything else we do. Some of us are taught some combination of the two. I believe that these teachings have a lot to do with why there was such a varied response to this statement. In addition, the ability of a woman to have a marriage and a family at the same time as she enjoys a successful career may depend, to some extent, on the career of choice. These ideas are further developed in the forthcoming interviews.

The ideas that underlie statements ten and eleven are somewhat similar. The statements are roughly opposites and pertain to the reluctance, or lack thereof, of women to help other women achieve success. The survey responses fly in the face of the statements made by the interview subjects. According to the interviews, there is generally competition among women and, at the least, a hesitation to help other women achieve high levels of success. In contrast, the survey respondents indicated that they feel women who have achieved success are eager to help other women. Obviously, this response could be related to the fact that they are members of a group whose primary purpose is to serve as a meeting place for professional and businesswomen. Perhaps these women, as members of this group, are naturally predisposed to want to help other women and do not represent the opinions of other women in the workforce. Or perhaps they do echo the opinions of the majority of working women. It is difficult to draw conclusions given such a small group of women and other uncontrollable factors.

Finally, the responses to the last two statements show that the future for women in business holds promise. The majority of the women felt that the future for women in



business is positive overall, and that women in the future will have fewer barriers to success than women of the past. These statements are encouraging and are in line with the aforementioned research as well as the responses of the interview subjects. It is reasonable to assume that there will probably be at least some barriers for women in the future, but it is also likely that these barriers will continue to fade gradually over time.

## INTERVIEWS

### RENEE ROMANO

Dr. Renee Romano is the Vice President for Educational and Student Services at the University of Northern Iowa. She is in her mid to late forties and has been a Vice President at UNI for several years. A self-proclaimed feminist, her perspective on the glass ceiling comes primarily from her experience as a woman in educational administration. A full transcript of her tape-recorded interview can be found in **Appendix E**.

From the very onset of the interview, it was clear that Renee believes wholeheartedly that the glass ceiling does exist for women today. (Incidentally, all interview subjects were in agreement regarding this existence and their personal experiences shed light on their beliefs.) Dr. Romano believes that the existence of the glass ceiling is two-fold. First of all, the structure of organizations has primarily been a hierarchy. This type of a structure does not lend well to the typically team-oriented, collaborative style that is embraced not only by Renee but also by countless other businesswomen. Renee feels that her collaborative nature may lead others around her to question her abilities to be decisive and think independently.

Another way in which Renee feels the glass ceiling is exposed is in peoples' natural tendency to hire someone like themselves. She feels that this may lead to men being hired

since men, who have traditionally had a stronger presence in the workforce, are perhaps more likely to do the hiring. In addition, Dr. Romano feels that there are indeed restrictions that we, as women, have placed upon ourselves.

Without a doubt, Renee feels that she has benefited from affirmative action. I found this to be a somewhat surprising revelation, given that she describes herself as a feminist. I would have assumed that most feminists would not wish to credit affirmative action laws with their success.. However, Dr. Romano feels that these laws have forced people to be “conscious about promoting women.” When asked whether or not she felt that men might increasingly feel discriminated against, she replied, “...I do think that men, especially white men, feel at a disadvantage. And perhaps they are, but I still look around and I see a lot of white men in positions of power. I don’t think that they’re that threatened.” This brings up an interesting point. Given the research done by Catalyst that shows men do not feel that women have to work harder than them, implying their perception of a level playing field, it is natural to wonder whether or not men feel discriminated against. We would all agree that there is a notion in our society that the white male today may have it harder than the rest as a result of affirmative action and other such laws. But, in contrast to this societal belief, is the statement made by Dr. Romano which brings up a good point: why, then, are there so many white males in positions of power?

Dr. Romano also expressed her belief in the continued existence of the “old boys club.” She does believe that women are capable of networking and breaking into this club, but that it is just not natural. Renee also feels that there is not a conscious effort made to exclude women, it just happens that way. Her solution to this problem of the “old boys club,” in addition to a conscious effort by all parties to attempt to come together, was that women form “old girls clubs.” This, to me, seemed rather counterproductive. The

formation of “old girls clubs,” while they would be beneficial in that they would allow women a place to come together, would also further perpetuate division along gender lines.

When asked whether she believes women have been forced to act “more like men” to get ahead, Renee responded with a resounding, “yes!” She feels there are two primary reasons that explain this tendency. First of all, she believes that the hierarchical nature of many organizations forces women to act in ways that are not necessarily comfortable for them. In addition, she believes that people learn leadership from the way they’ve been managed. Since managers have typically been male, female subordinates may learn these more stereotypically “male” methods of management and may replicate these skills when they themselves become managers. In addition, Renee expressed the belief that women may, in an effort to demonstrate these skills, actually go overboard. However good their intentions, these actions may cause the woman to be ostracized. In Dr. Romano’s words,

“The culture of the organization may value that decisiveness, powerful personality of the man...A woman who is very decisive, strong, and maybe even sometimes not-friendly, is seen negatively. A man who acts that way is seen as a leader, and powerful...And women are ‘the bitch.’”

Dr. Romano extended this topic further by bringing up the issue of whether women themselves even enjoy working for a female boss. She said that many women she knows have told her that they had had a female boss in the past, and she was “a bitch.” For this reason, these women say, they do not like female bosses. Renee brought up an excellent point when she said, “Now here’s my point. If you’ve ever had a bad male boss, would you say, ‘I don’t like male bosses’? No. But if you’ve had one woman boss you didn’t like, you’d say, ‘I don’t like women bosses.’” It is interesting to note that men and women alike tend to stereotype female bosses simply because they’ve had one female boss they didn’t like, but would never do the same for their male bosses.



In response to the question of whether or not successful women must abandon goals of marriage and family, Renee replied by affirming her belief that it is possible to “have it all.” She therefore does not believe that the abandonment of these goals is necessary, or even desirable. In her opinion, women should be free to make their own decisions. I found this to be an extremely open-minded response. It has always seemed to me that the extraordinarily successful women of the world are unmarried and without children. The idea that it would be possible to do it all, regardless of whether or not this is feasible, was refreshing.

On a related note, Dr. Romano does not feel that those women who have quit their jobs have made the pursuit of success harder for women as a whole. Although she expressed strong convictions in this idea, some of her later comments made me question her true feelings. For example, when asked whether she felt people were reluctant to hire young women because they fear the women will leave the job to have children, Dr. Romano admitted that she has actually had those thoughts when interviewing applicants. Although she stressed that she tries to put these thoughts out of her mind, the fact that these thoughts even entered her consciousness seems to indicate that she does, on some level, feel that women who have quit their jobs to have children have indeed perpetuated stereotypes and perhaps made the struggle for success even harder.

Finally, Dr. Romano’s thoughts on the way successful women treat other women were mixed. She believed that although we should be helping one another, this doesn’t necessarily happen. This is in accordance with the other interview candidates and previously mentioned research as well. Women, especially successful women, apparently realize that they should be mentoring and supporting other women on their way up. However, perhaps for reasons of competitiveness or a desire to “be the lone woman at the top,” we tend to

instead maintain competition with other female colleagues. Unfortunately, this is one way that we are helping to make our own struggles as women harder. If we would simply work with one another instead of against one another, we would likely see increasing success in our ability to break down the barriers of the glass ceiling.

## **RONNIE PODOLEFSKY**

Ronnie Podolefsky is an attorney with her own practice in Waterloo, Iowa. She is primarily concerned with employment discrimination, and, as such, has much experience in the struggles of women in the workforce. She was interviewed on November 18, 2002 and did not wish to be recorded. Therefore, a brief synopsis of her answers can be found in **Appendix F.**

As could be expected, Ms. Podolefsky agreed absolutely that the glass ceiling still exists for women in business today. Expanding upon this point, she indicated that many of her clients are women who have experienced discrimination in the work place. In addition, she called upon personal examples where she herself has felt the impact of the glass ceiling. One particularly interesting example was in regards to a program she had applied for in her undergraduate studies. Ms. Podolefsky, who graduated high school at age 16, had applied for a program at Boston College wherein she would receive both her M.D. and B.S. in five years. She was interviewed and was not accepted. She never knew why until many years later when her father told her the reason. Apparently, after the interview her father was called into the room. The interviewer proceeded to tell him that his daughter was not accepted, saying, "Can you imagine this small young woman as a doctor?" Ronnie also cited

examples from the more recent past, such as a time when a judge called her “Lewinsky” in open court.

In addition to these personal examples, Ms. Podolefsky explained that, in her opinion, discrimination against women still exists in that they are not given the same opportunities as men and are left out of important decisions. She felt that female attorneys in particular do not speak up about discrimination because they fear it will adversely affect their cases and their clients. This explanation could be extended to the female population in general. Perhaps women as a whole do not speak up about discrimination for fear of the negative consequences of doing so. This seems like a double blow to women: they experience discrimination but are fearful of speaking up about it and so nothing is done to end it.

Ms. Podolefsky went on to cite this as one of several reasons why the glass ceiling has continued to exist. In her law practice, she sees clients who need jobs desperately. If they challenge the system, they risk losing their jobs. In addition, issues of discrimination against women are often difficult to prove. These reasons, perhaps unique to Ronnie given her experience with the law, are still somewhat related to the idea of culture as brought up previously by Renee Romano.

Renee and Ronnie also had similar opinions on the topic of women acting more like men to get ahead. In Ronnie’s opinion, there exists a masculinist model where in women who act “male” can lose their jobs and are called abrasive and obnoxious. Men who act the same are considered assertive. Stereotyping exists wherein women are expected to be “feminine” but are then labeled weak. These ideas are closely aligned with the opinions of all of the interview subjects.

When asked whether she had ever felt she had to act or dress differently because she was a woman, Ronnie provided a very intriguing response, one that was unlike the responses of the other interview subjects. She said that most female attorneys wear skirts and heels. Ronnie refuses to do so, conscious of the fact that this refusal makes her “stick out.” She says that although she is very aware of the impact of dress, she refuses to change her ways in order to fit predetermined stereotypes. She dresses in a manner that is comfortable to her and doesn’t seem to worry about what people think. She did also indicate, however, that she is in agreement with the other women in that she feels that women in business casual dress do not receive the same respect as men in the same dress.

Ronnie seemed to think that women in certain careers may feel the need to forego marriage and family. Obviously some careers allow for time with children and family. However, she feels that in some cases it would be hard for a woman to have family responsibilities. Ms. Podolefsky did point out that she feels that family should be a part of the work world. This shows that she would rather not see women have to abandon these aspects of their personal lives and would instead like to see a family-friendly workplace. She also indicated that some people feel it is a woman’s role to be a wife and mother and women who are single may be viewed unfavorably. These two contrasting ideas make for another unpleasant predicament for women. It seems to me that there are two options and neither one is particularly good. On one hand, a woman can put her career in front of all else, perhaps sacrificing marriage and family. In this way, she can attempt to achieve to the fullest extent, but she risks discrimination by those who feel that she has abandoned the roles intended for her. On the other hand, she can have the marriage and family and perhaps be unable to find the success she truly desires. This leaves women “between a rock and a hard place.”

Ms. Podolefsky's ideas about the ways in which women treat one another were directly in line with the other interview subjects. She felt that there exists both competition and camaraderie. There are women who consciously help other women and there are instances where women are in heavy competition with one another. She feels that the majority of women have incorporated stereotypes into their consciousness and therefore treat men with more respect and authority. Extending this idea to the topic at hand, she explained that she felt that competition tends to exist between women when there is a struggle for power that comes from a man. Ronnie also felt that women do resist helping other women out of fear that they will lose their own jobs, an idea that was also brought up by Renee.

When asked about the future for women in business, Ronnie was not optimistic. Although she admits that things are better than they once were, issues of discrimination still exist. She explained that once a person sees the glass ceiling, it is clearly there. The problem seems to be that although we may know it is there, we lack the words to explain it. Therefore, we tend to nod and smile, which diminishes our ability to deal with it. These words leave little room for hope, at least for the near future. Ronnie went on to say that she doesn't feel that barriers to women will be broken down in her lifetime. Somewhat tongue-in-cheek, she said that they won't be broken down until men have babies.

## **VICTORIA ROBINSON**

Dr. Victoria Robinson is a professor of education at the University of Northern Iowa. She has previously been a principal and administrator at the high school level. In addition to her experience in education, she completed her doctoral research on the subject



of women as high school principals. Through her research and her life experiences, Vickie has very strong opinions about the current status of the glass ceiling.

In response to the first question, Vickie indicated that in the early nineties, the subject of the glass ceiling was widely known and often talked about. Now that we have entered the twenty-first century, she feels that people assume the lack of information in the media about the glass ceiling indicates that it is no longer an issue. In contrast, Dr. Robinson feels that the glass ceiling is “Gone but not forgotten; forgotten but not gone.” Her own personal experiences serve as a basis for this opinion. When pursuing a high school principalship, she was asked questions like: “You’re such a good teacher, why leave the classroom?” “Do you really think you’re capable?” and “As a single mom with two kids how do you think you’re going to be able to do this?” These questions would undoubtedly never have been asked of a man in the same position.

Dr. Robinson also indicated that there are a number of reasons why the glass ceiling has continued to exist. For one, she points to a lack of mentoring and the idea that women who succeed are reluctant to help others. In addition, she feels that men, in general, learned teamwork as children and adolescents through sports. Women, who have traditionally not had as many athletic opportunities, will begin to develop these skills as women’s sports continue to emerge. These teambuilding skills, honed at a young age, are perhaps one of the factors that can explain why men seem to be more natural at networking than women, according to Dr. Robinson.

Vickie’s answer to the question of whether women have been forced to act more “like men” to get ahead was predictably congruent to those of the other interview subjects. She feels that when women are assertive and aggressive they are labeled “the bitch.” While assertiveness may be in some women’s nature, others who find they are more caring and

nurturing should feel free to express these traits, as the idea of teamwork continues to pervade the workplace. Vickie also feels that women of her generation have been conditioned to sacrifice, exemplifying the way they saw their mothers behave. Some women of her age have brought this idea into the workplace and have a tendency to let things slide where perhaps they would be better suited to speak up. In addition, Dr. Robinson feels that she, like some other women, was brought up to believe that she had to work harder than “the boys” to be successful. I think this is an idea that is still being engrained in the mindset of young females. In addition, the idea that we have to work harder than our male colleagues can perhaps serve as a partial explanation for the continued existence of the glass ceiling. Until we believe within ourselves that all men and women are on a level playing field, maybe women will continue to try to outwork their male counterparts and see no results.

Also in line with the other interview subjects were Vickie’s ideas on the topic of dress. While she said that she would “hate for women to think they always had to wear a suit,” she added that she feels appearances make powerful impressions. We, especially as women, need to be aware of the message our dress is sending. She also indicated that she believes a woman in business casual is typically perceived differently than a man.

Dr. Robinson’s thoughts on the idea of abandoning goals of marriage and family were particularly interesting. She was quick to point out that leaving and reentering the workforce is different for women than it is for men. Women who leave the workforce for years at a time to raise children may find it extremely difficult to re-enter this workforce and achieve as much success as they would have otherwise. She also indicated that although women were previously conditioned to be mothers and nothing more, she feels that women have now tried to do it all, in a sense to become superwoman. In her opinion, this generally



isn't possible, nor is it necessarily healthy to attempt. Interestingly, Dr. Robinson feels that she would not be where she is today had she remained married. In her opinion, marriage carries along with it personal and social obligations that can interfere with a woman's pursuit of a successful career. By this, she does not mean to imply that women should not marry, or even that she thinks they might feel this way; only that this was her own personal experience.

On a related issue, Vickie's opinions on the notion of the respect a single woman receives in comparison to an equally qualified woman with a family were also intriguing. She feels that there are sort of two camps on this. First, there are those women who are married with children and feel that the single woman is missing out. Then there are women of the same lifestyle who wish they could be single. In this respect, whether or not a woman with children earns the same respect as her single counterpart is really a matter of perspective. However, she did indicate that she felt strongly that women who put their careers on hold to have children will not come to resent those children on down the line. Vickie feels, presumably as do all people with children, that as we age we begin to put things in perspective and realize that there is more to life than our careers.

Vickie's vision of the future entails women and men acting as human beings. By this she means that she hopes we can feel free to act as ourselves, without the pressures to conform that may be in existence today. She would hate to see the elimination of masculine and feminine traits, an asexual world if you will. As for the future of women and the glass ceiling, she hopes that "women continue to be women." She would also like for society to recognize that feminine traits are just as valuable as masculine ones. This seems to be happening as the hierarchical society alluded to by Renee seems to be transforming into a workforce based on teamwork. However, this is a slow process and it will likely take some time before women's traditional values are deemed as significant as those of men.

This issue brought up an interesting question. As Vickie spoke of society recognizing the importance of feminine traits I wondered, “Do we as women value our own feminine traits?” When I think of many of the women I know, I think that the traits we would most like to use to define ourselves would be: intelligent, assertive, respected, educated, and perhaps a little sarcastic. Nowhere in my circle of female friends would I find someone who wanted to be remembered solely as caring, nurturing, or kind. While these are all traits we value in ourselves, I do not think they are necessarily the ones we wish to use to define ourselves as women. However, when I asked Vickie what three traits she would use to describe herself, she said caring, driven, and pragmatic. She seems to have struck a nice balance. Perhaps the younger generation will find that balance as well as we enter a workforce that values us for who we are, not who we are supposed to be.

Another of Dr. Robinson’s hopes for the future is that women won’t be out of the loop but will instead “create the loop.” However, she does feel that this could mean the tables will turn and men will feel discriminated against which will open a new Pandora’s box of questions. Bottom line, she hopes that men and women will value each other and find a way to offset each other’s strengths and weaknesses.

## **KAREN BLOUNT**

Karen Blount is an assistant vice president at CUNA Mutual Life Insurance Company. She began her work there at the age of 25 and has worked her way up through the ranks to achieve the position she currently holds. An interesting side note to these accomplishments is that all of this was attained without a business degree. In fact, Ms. Blount holds a degree in elementary education. As a woman who has made her own way,

Ms. Blount is more than qualified to speak on the topic of the glass ceiling. A transcript of her interview can be found in **Appendix H**.

As expected, Karen agreed with her fellow interview subjects that the glass ceiling does continue to exist. When asked to cite personal examples of her experiences in breaking through barriers, Karen said she would be able to generate examples from a few decades ago, but was hard pressed to come up with more recent examples. This seemed to be fairly true of all interview candidates, and points to the idea that the glass ceiling may be less overt today than it once was, a notion further developed in the conclusions to this research.

One example that came from her own company 20 years ago was particularly interesting. At that time, there was a company sponsored male-only golf outing. Then a new president came into office and, with considerable foresight considering the times, denounced the male-only golf outing and insisted that women be included. This created significant controversy within the company; the decision angered many of the male employees. The company-sponsored outing ended up gradually fading from existence, but the “good old boys” went ahead and had their own golf outing, escaping the new regulation by saying that it was not a company-sponsored event.

Pointing to culture and social norms as the primary reasons for the continuation of the glass ceiling, Ms. Blount also feels that women have begun to act more “like men” to get ahead. In her words:

“Maybe it’s not even a matter of acting more like men but rather allowing those traditionally “male” qualities in ourselves, that have possibly existed within us for some time, to come to the surface. The nice thing is that for women who do bring forward those skills, although they may have been subdued, we also have a nice blend with the traditional female attributes. We can think about the people side of issues too.”

She feels that this blend of both male and female traits has forced women to be better at multi-tasking and seeing all sides of an issue. Therefore, acting “like men” is not

necessarily a bad thing, or something that we should feel ashamed about. Rather, it is something to embrace so long as we are, above all, true to ourselves.

On the related topic of whether or not a woman who desires to achieve must give up marriage and family, Ms. Blount's opinion is directly in line with the other interviewees. She does not feel that this is a necessity. However, she does indicate that a woman needs to make sure that her husband understands, and is supportive of, her career goals. She also feels that it would probably be easier for a woman to obtain success if she were single, however, she doesn't think this means it should necessarily be avoided. She went on to say that, "I've seen too many young people get married who are both off on their own career paths and then they have children and what happens to the woman's career? Ended." This seems to indicate that although Ms. Blount doesn't feel that we must abandon these goals, we must also be sure that we understand the responsibilities that come along with them.

This discussion of marriage and family led us slightly off topic, and we began to discuss maternal instincts and whether or not men may have "fraternal instincts." I asked Karen if she could think of a reason why it seems that we always hear stories about a woman who has quits her job to stay at home with her child but we never hear stories of fathers doing the same. Karen, who happens to be my mother, replied by saying:

"I think men just don't have those same feelings of maternal instincts and responsibility for the child. Even now, my female coworkers are typically the ones who stay home with their children when sick, not the husbands. And to tell you the truth, when you were little and sick, I wanted to stay home with you. I wouldn't have felt right if I didn't. I don't think men feel that way."

This really struck a chord with me, as I began to consider the repercussions of such a notion in this current team-building atmosphere. There seems to be little or no debate that women can, and do, act decisive, aggressive, and assertive, a.k.a. masculine. There also seems to be little debate that most women are able to strike a decent balance between these



characteristics and more traditionally feminine traits. However, are men able to do the same? Obviously, there are men who are sensitive, nurturing, and relationship-oriented. But there do seem to be some innately female traits, such as the notion of maternal instincts, that a man cannot easily imitate. Therefore, will men ever be as good of “team players” as women? An interesting question, and one that would probably be answered by considering that the opposite is also probably true, that there are innately male traits that perhaps women cannot easily imitate. This discussion seems to echo Vickie’s hopes for a future where men will be men and women will be women.

Ms. Blount’s thoughts on whether or not a woman with a family earns the same respect as a single woman were slightly different than the other interviewees. She feels that the level of respect a woman earns depends on how well she can balance her life and whether or not she can fully dedicate herself to her work. These seem like understandable assumptions. The ideas of balance and dedication are unique to each individual, and as such, the question cannot be answered broadly for all women.

Finally, Karen’s thoughts on the future echoed those of her fellow interview subjects. She thinks societal views are changing and that we are headed down the right path. However, when asked whether we will ever see the complete disintegration of the glass ceiling, Karen replied, “Not in my lifetime.”

## CONCLUSIONS

The first, and most obvious, conclusion that can be drawn from all of this is that the glass ceiling does, in fact exist. The exact ways the glass ceiling shows itself may be unique to each career, or even to each woman. However, there seems to be little debate, at least

among women, that the increased awareness of the eighties and nineties was insufficient in eradicating all barriers to women.

This then begs the question, if the glass ceiling still exists, why don't we hear anything about it? I can only speculate as to the answer. My guess would be that the glass ceiling is simply subtler than it used to be. Back 10 or 20 years ago, the glass ceiling was a topic on everybody's tongue. Perhaps now people assume the problem has been solved. In contrast, I do not feel that the heightened awareness of the seventies and eighties cured the problem. Instead I think it made the people who create the glass ceiling a little sneakier. I think that the glass ceiling is even so subtle in some instances that we are unaware, or even in denial, of its existence. We, as women, would all like to think that there are no longer any barriers to our success. However, I think if we are honest with ourselves we may discover that this is, sadly, not the case.

While I do feel that the glass ceiling still exists, I do not feel that this is necessarily a reason to feel completely discouraged. Without question, women have come a long way, and respect for our gender continues to grow. We are definitely headed in the right direction; we just have a little ways to go.

Finally, this research has, above all, led me to believe that perhaps the most single important factor in the success of women is an open-mind. We must be aware that there will be barriers, and we must know that the way we present ourselves does matter. We must also be aware of all things around us, so that we may better cope with life's little disappointments and understand the world we live in. Without this understanding and open-mindedness, we will be reconstructing our own glass ceilings.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although this research was informative and enlightening, I do have several suggestions for further research. First, this research would be interesting when conducted across differing age groups. Nearly all of the interviewees and the survey respondents fell into the same age category: women aged 45-55. A cross section of women from different generations would likely show how perceptions have changed over time, and how they continue to change.

Also, research conducted across different geographical areas could point to differences in sub-cultures within the United States. Perhaps women in the mid-west feel differently about the glass ceiling than do women on either of the coasts.

Finally, similar research on the opinion of males would be extremely interesting. This could be in regards to both their opinions about the glass ceiling for women and their feelings about the idea that there may be a glass ceiling developing for men. In either case, hearing the opinions of the other side would undoubtedly provide a basis for understanding how society in general feels about the glass ceiling.



## Appendix A

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## Appendix B

### Survey Questions

November 18, 2002

Please indicate your degree of agreement with the following statements.

- |  | Strongly<br>Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly<br>Agree |
|--|----------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------|
|--|----------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------|
1. The "glass ceiling" exists to a significant extent for women in business today.
  2. The "glass ceiling" has shifted from a concept encompassing limitations placed on women to limitations placed on white males.
  3. The "glass ceiling" exists for women primarily because culture in the United States has allowed it to perpetuate.
  4. Women have been forced to "act like men" (i.e. assertive, aggressive, independent) in order to overcome the obstacles of the "glass ceiling."
  5. Women in business must dress differently than their male counterparts in order to both be taken seriously and to earn respect.
  6. "Flirting with the male ego" and "flaunting our femininity" are two ways women in business commonly act in order to "get ahead."
  7. Women who desire to achieve success, to the extent that their male counterparts have, must abandon goals of marriage and family.
  8. Women who have quit their jobs to raise a family have made it harder for the rest of us, i.e. have allowed the glass ceiling to continue.
  9. A woman with a family earns exactly the same respect as an equally qualified single woman with no family commitments.
  10. Women who have achieved high levels of success are typically reluctant to help other women to achieve similar goals.
  11. Successful women are eager to help other women achieve success.
  12. Most women would rather have a male boss than a female boss.

13. Men have found success more easily than women because they are naturally better at networking.

14. A woman who obtains a top position in a company will always be “out of the loop” when compared to her male counterparts (i.e. since she isn’t a part of the “old boys club” of golfing, drinking, and talking about sports.)

15. The future for women in business is positive overall.

16. Women in the future will have as many, if not more, barriers to success than their predecessors.

## Appendix C

### Survey Results

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Majority Opinion
1			1	8	1	Agree, 80%
2		4	6			Neutral, 60%
3		1	2	5	2	Agree, 50%
4		2	1	7		Agree, 70%
5	1	4	2	2		Disagree, 44%
6	2	5	2	1		Disagree, 50%
7	2	3	1	4		Agree, 40%
8	2	5	1	2		Disagree, 50%
9	1	4	3	1	1	Disagree, 40%
10	2	6	2			Disagree, 60%
11		2	2	5	1	Disagree, 50%
12	1	2	4	3		Neutral, 40%
13	1	4	2	1	1	Disagree, 44%
14		3	2	4		Agree, 44%
15		1	2	5	1	Disagree, 56%
16	1	4	3	1		Disagree, 44%

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions

- I. To what extent do you believe the “glass ceiling” exists for women in business?
  - a. Could you provide personal examples and experiences?
  - b. Do you think men believe the “glass ceiling” still exists or do they believe that they are now the ones at a disadvantage?
  - c. If you believe the glass ceiling still exists, what has allowed it to exist? Have our own actions as women allowed it to continue, or is its existence out of our control?
  - d. If you believe the glass ceiling has disappeared,
    1. What measures were taken to eliminate it?
    2. How do you explain the relative lack of women in top positions in business?
  - e. Does the “old boys club” still exist, and if so, can a woman become a member?
- II. Have women been forced to act more “like men” to get ahead?
  - a. Must a woman act in pursuit of her own self-interests, be aggressive and assertive in order to obtain top positions? Must she act this way to be respected?
  - b. Have you ever felt that you had to act or dress differently than your male counterparts in order to get the respect you deserve?
    1. Do women in business need to dress conservatively in order to be respected?
    2. Is a woman in business casual dress perceived differently than a woman in a suit?
    3. Have you ever felt the need to “flaunt your femininity” or “flirt with the male ego” to get what you want and deserve? Is this bad or is it a natural human phenomenon?
  - c. Is it necessary for a woman who desires to achieve (to the extent that her male counterparts have succeeded) to abandon goals of marriage and family?
    1. Have women who have quit their jobs to have children made success harder for the rest of us?
    2. Does a woman with a family earn the same respect as a single woman with only her career in mind?
- III. How do women who have already obtained success treat other women who are on their way?
  - a. Does heavy competition exist between successful women or is there a camaraderie?
  - b. Do you think women at the top are reluctant to help other women who wish to attain the same?
    1. If so, why do you think this reluctance exists?

(Do we fear another woman will replace us, because we want to be the lone woman who has achieved success, or for some other reason?)

2. Has another woman in your profession ever given you advice on how to succeed?
- c. Would you rather have a male superior or a female superior? Who do you think would be harder on you?

IV. Where do you see the future for women in business?

- a. Will there always be barriers to our success?
- b. Is the future positive overall or negative overall?
- c. Any final thoughts?

## Appendix E

### Renee

Interview with Renee Romano

Friday, November 8, 2002

Transcript of interview

Megan: To what extent do you believe that the glass ceiling still exists for women?

Renee: I think it exists from a number of perspectives. One, I think that some organizations, and higher ed. is one of them, are somewhat male-oriented, in terms of a hierarchy, its very hierarchical, and, umm, things kind of are top-down. For me, my style is more collaborative, and more, umm, across instead of top-down. I tend to talk with people across, and that, sometimes, doesn't mesh with the hierarchical structure. Let me give you an example. Let's say somebody asks me, for instance, for an opinion on what I want to do about closing the offices on the Monday before Christmas Eve. I might say, let me talk to my staff, let me get some feedback from my staff. Somebody might think, Oh, she doesn't have an opinion, she has to ask her staff all the time about everything. So, that is really a simple example of the way I operate, and the way I want to get feedback from everybody, and want to make a collaborative decision, whereas other people might expect me to be decisive and to have my own opinion. They might wonder, "why do you have to ask people?" So, that's one way. I think that organizational structures expect people to be decisive, and to function independently. And I think as a woman, I tend to be more collaborative.

Another way I think the glass ceiling exists is because I think there is a natural tendency to hire people that are like you. I don't think people even think about it. It's like, Ok we need a person for this position, and then they just naturally imagine someone that's kind of like them, because they think they do a good job. This might tend to be a male. They might not look for a woman in a particular position. They might tend to hire the same type of person that held the position before.

I mean, I definitely think the glass ceiling still exists because look, for example, at education. You have all these women teaching, and how many women principals are there? How does that work? Is it that women don't put themselves in that position, that women don't put themselves out there? Are women less likely to want to be in a leadership role? Perhaps there are some self-imposed restrictions that we've put on ourselves as well.

I guess I also think that, for me in my field, you have more potential if you're willing to move. I don't know if this is true in business, but its true in higher ed. In higher ed, if you want to stay in the same place, you will not experience the same career potential as if you're willing to move. Women, if you're married and have children and your husband has a job, and you tend to put your career in the background. If you can't be flexible and be willing to move, and if you're tied to another person's career, that creates problems as well. Luckily for me, my husband doesn't compete with me career wise. We decided as a couple to follow my career, and its made a big difference. The woman's career tends to come second, it just



does. Especially if you start to have children, and people start to see that role as more of the woman's role.

Megan: Do you think women see that their children and their families are more important than their careers or do you think that's a value society places on us?

Renee: Both. I think that we do because society places that value on us. There's a lot of pressure to conform. My husband isn't really a stay-at-home dad, but his career is such that sometimes he works and sometimes he doesn't. Even some strong feminists I know, whose husbands don't work, sometimes are a little sheepish to tell others about that.

Megan: Along kind of the same lines, do you think that men believe the glass ceiling exists for women, or do you think they've felt it shift to themselves?

Renee: First of all, I do think that I have benefited from affirmative action. I think that people and organizations have been conscious about promoting women, and I think I've benefited from that. And I do think that men, especially white men, feel at a disadvantage. And perhaps they are, but I still look around and I see a lot of white men in positions of power. I don't think that they're that threatened. For example, on the cabinet at UNI, I'm the only woman vice president. Because there is such an effort to hire people of color and women, I do think that men feel at a disadvantage. And they might be.

Megan: What do you think has allowed the glass ceiling to exist?

Renee: I think its culture and I think the matter of organizations duplicating themselves, that's a cultural thing. And culture creates self-imposed restrictions too. So, I think it's culture; it's history. And I think that stuff changes, but I think it's slow to change.

Megan: Do you think that the "old boys club" still exists? Is that a barrier to women advancing, that they can't break into this club?

Renee: I think they can, but I think it's just not natural for women. And I see it so much. When I think of the "old boys club" I think of social settings, like playing golf. It's nothing that anybody does purposely. Nobody says, "Let's exclude her." But it's like everyone's letting their hair down, and its natural men want to talk about golf, and its hard for women to break into that because its just not natural. You have to kind of force yourself to go into that group of men, and to start being social. But I do think that women can form "old girls clubs." Women then feel kind of comfortable around each other, and I think that if we're conscious about working together, that can be helpful too.

Megan: But then it kind of turns into a junior high dance, with the men on one side of the room and the women on the other. And that's not productive either.

Renee: Yeah, you just kind of have to force yourself to go over there. I've been in a situation where I knew there was a group of men and I knew that I needed to interact with them. But I don't know if they ever think that about me, like "I better go talk to that group of women." Because we're not in power, I don't know.

Megan: It's kind of like, why should we fake an interest in golf just to do that. Why don't they fake an interest in something that we're interested in? It never works that way.

Renee: I guess they think its just not necessary.

Megan: Moving on to a new topic, do you think women have been forced to act more "like men" in order to get ahead?

Renee: I'm glad you brought that up. Remember when I was talking before about our natural tendency, maybe to be more collaborative. But because the culture of the organization is more hierarchical, I do think that women tend to try to act in a way that isn't comfortable for them. They see that this is the culture of the organization. Here's another thing. I think you learn leadership from the way you've been managed. If your manager was a man, and he behaved in a certain way, and you want to do a good job, so you behave like he does. Maybe even more so. So you're going to be really decisive and really abrupt sometimes because you try to model the managers you've seen and if those are all men, you almost try to "out-man" them. The culture of the organization may value that decisiveness, and powerful personality of the man. And men get away with that more than women. A woman who is very decisive, strong, and maybe even sometimes not-friendly, is seen negatively. A man who acts that way is seen as a leader, and powerful. Men get away with a more decisive personality and style. And women are "the bitch."

Megan: Do you think if a woman acts like that, it's her female counterparts or her male counterparts who think she's the bitch? Or is it everyone?

Renee: It's everybody. Not only that, I have been told by women that they don't like a woman boss. That they had a woman boss in the past, and she was a bitch. Now, here's my point. If you've ever had a bad male boss, would you say, "I don't like male bosses?" No. But if you've had one woman boss you didn't like you'd say, "I don't like women bosses."

Because, you tend to typify women, because it's different. But we've all had male bosses that were terrible, because some bosses are good and some are bad, but did we ever say, "I don't like male bosses."

Megan: Do you think that you have to dress differently than your male counterparts to get respect?

Renee: Absolutely. I usually dress up. Depending on the situation. If it's an important meeting, I have a suit on. I think men can get away with more of a casual style. I think women, and people of color, need to dress differently. I really believe that if a man is in a position of authority, his authority is accepted, and they have to lose it. If it's a woman, she has to earn her credibility and respect. It's not automatic. I really believe this, but has it kept me down? No, but I think being aware of that stuff really helps. It's important to be aware of the way people perceive you.

Megan: Do you think that the steps you've taken to get where you are would have been easier if you had been a white male?

Renee: No, I think for me, having a husband who was willing to move and being aware of all of these things really helped me. I never felt like I had to outman a man, and I was always comfortable with my own style. I think being aware of those things has worked for me. Here's another thing. I was 44 when I entered this position. I think when I started people thought I was really young to be in this position. I don't think they would have thought that of a man in my position. I think women have stress. For me, being short and having a bubbly personality gives me kind of a cheerleader image. So I really need to watch how I act and dress. If I dress down or go casual, I just feel, maybe people don't see it, but I feel like I'm not going to be credible at all.

Megan: So what are the implications of this when you think of all the businesses are going to business casual?

Renee: I think it's hard. I think you have to decide that for yourself. You're tall, too.

That's helpful. Especially as a woman. As a small woman, I have this childlike diminutive



image. If I'm standing with a group of my male colleagues, and they're all a lot taller than me, I notice that. I think you should do what feels comfortable to you.

Megan: Have you ever been told, or felt a need to, sort of "flaunt your femininity."

Renee: I've never flirted. But, there are times when you ask for help when you may not really need it. If you really think about it, you know that you're pumping up their egos. They sort of take you under their wing. But if you were a man doing the same thing, they may not be willing to help you. They may feel in competition. I've never flirted, I've always been very asexual, because there is a whole thing about sexual harassment. If you go into a group of women and ask them if they've ever experienced sexual harassment, I would guess 85-90% would say yes. We've all experienced that, so I've never wanted to go there. I've been willing to step back and defer to a man in order to manipulate the situation the way I wanted. I think you can make it work for you. I think this is okay, because as I said earlier we are victims of our culture. Since so much of that works against us, I think it's okay to make some of it work for us. I do think it would be wrong to be "flirty." I try to just be myself. I don't usually play too many games.

Megan: Do you think its necessary for a woman who desires to achieve, to the extent that her male colleagues have achieved, to abandon goals of marriage and family? Your situation is pretty special, with your husband.

Renee: I don't agree with the idea that you can't have it all. I think you can. I think that you can have marriage and family, but I do think you need to go into the marriage with the understanding that you are serious about your career. My situation is unique, other women may have more career-oriented husbands. I think you need to talk about that in advance. It's okay to say, "I'm gonna put my career on the back burner while we raise kids." I think that's okay. I don't have any judgments. It's not okay for me, but I want everybody to be able to do what's right for them. People ought to be able to do what's right for them. I do think that when your kids are little, it would be hard to be running strong with your career. Keep your career going, but put it on the back burner while your kids are on the front burner. I only have one child, and I think it would be hard to have a lot of kids. It's great if you have a flexible job, where you can leave if they call from the day care center and their sick. It's great to have a boss who will let you leave if you tell them your kids are sick. I've found that men can be just as understanding about this as women. I've even found that women who don't have children are less understanding of that than men who have children. People with children have a common understanding.

Megan: I think I already know the answer to this, but do you think that women who have completely quit their careers to have children have helped to perpetuate stereotypes and made it harder for the rest of us?

Renee: No. See, I'm a feminist. I have always believed that to me feminism is about not being in a box. It's about being whatever you want, and if you want to be a stay-at-home mom, then do that. I don't think people should have to be a mom at home because that's the only choice for them. No, I don't think it perpetuates stereotypes. If a man, wants to be a stay-at-home dad, they ought to be able to do that too, without feeling embarrassed. It's harder for a man to be a stay-at home dad and be accepted in society than it is for a woman to be career-oriented and not be married, have kids, and everything.

Megan: Do you think that a woman with kids and a family earns the same respect as a single woman?

Renee: I think its hard depending on the career. Like in education, its probably easier. But I've heard that lawyers, they work a lot of hours, and that might be hard. What happens is that with family and kids, you are forced to not work twelve-hour days. You are just forced, you just can't. In some organizational cultures, and some careers, you may be at a disadvantage. That's a decision everyone has to make on their own. I think its okay to take a break, for maybe a ten-year period. But I think it's hard to get back in there. All of a sudden they're in their late forties and they don't know what to do.

Megan: Do you think that people are reluctant to hire women in their twenties because they think they'll leave in a few years to have kids?

Renee: I do. I definitely think that. I'm a female, I'm a big feminist. If I interview a pregnant woman, I wonder in the back of my head, "Is she going to want to work after she has the baby?" I force myself not to make a decision based on that, but its still there. I also think that one of the reasons why women's salaries are lower is because when I'm sitting here interviewing a woman, negotiating salary, I may not see that woman as a principal wage earner. So I might think I can get away with a lower salary, since we're always trying to save money. I would never do that, but I think it happens. I think it goes on in the back of their minds.

Megan: What's it going to take to change that?

Renee: People being conscious of their feelings. The more we're aware of our underlying feelings, the better off we are. If we deny them, we won't ever get anywhere. These things are in the back of all of our minds. If I can be sexist, so can these men. I do think things are changing. I have seen organizational culture change to where a collaborative style is more valued. I think that the men who are relationship-oriented are letting that come out more.

Megan: How do you think women who are successful treat other women who are on their way?

Renee: If you're conscious of it, you should be helping other women. And I think they do. But I do think there is a nice thing about being the only woman. If I'm the only woman, I can enjoy that distinctiveness. When another woman comes along, I may not be real receptive because I've been the only woman and I've gotten attention for that. I've even had those thoughts. And I recognize it and try to correct it. But, I could see that if you weren't conscious, you would say, "I like being the only woman, and I like taking advantage of that. And then you wouldn't be real willing to help another woman."

Megan: I think that's kind of natural. I don't think we typically see women as being that competitive, but I think its out there.

Renee: I tell myself that if I do the right thing, it will come back at me in a good way. Help women come up because you're gonna get more out of that relationship than you would if you were the only one.

Megan: Has another woman in your profession ever "taken you under their wing" and told you what you need to do to get where you want to be?

Renee: I've had male and female mentors. A female mentor once told me, "You still have a young child at home, right? Good, because once you don't have any kids in the house you

lose your balance and you get consumed by your career. Having a child at home forces you to have balance.” And I’ve remembered that. Balance is a good thing.

Megan: Any final thoughts?

Renee: Well, have you ever read “The imposter syndrome?” This is another self-imposed thing. Women get in these jobs, and they’re scared to death. They feel like imposters. Whereas a man gets in this position, and he may know less than the woman does, but he knows he can do it. It’s a confidence thing. If you don’t keep yourself down, you can do okay. I think for the most part, women work harder. And this is a stereotype, but I think its there. I think its because we are less confident. And we want to do a good job so we try extra hard.

Megan: Why do you think, then, that there are so many women in education who just stay teachers?

Renee: I think it’s self-imposed. Between the family and maybe not wanting that authority, I think it’s more self-imposed.

Megan: Do you think that though culture some women have come to believe that they really want to be a stay-at-home mom, or put limitations on themselves. And then later on they almost resent their children when they realize that wasn’t what they wanted to do?

Renee: I think that happened more a generation ago than it does now. There was a whole generation of women who felt trapped and unhappy. And I think that has diminished. I think there are more role models for women, and I think it’s more acceptable for women to be professionals. It’s slow, but I think for your generation it’s going to be a lot better. I think the future for women is better in some fields than others. As a woman you need to be aware of what’s all against you and what’s for you and how to deal with that. I think its more promising for women than it is for people of color, unfortunately. I think the fact of being a woman is working in people’s favor. But whether women are willing to put themselves out there is another issue.



## Appendix F

### Ronnie

Interview with Ronnie Podolefsky, Attorney at Law  
Monday, November 18, 2002  
Brief notes from interview.

Do you believe the “glass ceiling” currently exists for women in business?

-Absolutely. Law practice is primarily concerned with employment discrimination issues, and this work has undoubtedly shown the existence of the glass ceiling.

-Personal example: at age 16 graduated high school and applied for a program at Boston College where she would receive her M.D. and her B.S. in 5 years. Was interviewed but not accepted into the program. Never knew why until her father told her the reason many years later. Apparently, after her interview was over, the interviewer called her father into the room alone and said, “Can you imagine this small young woman as a doctor?”

-Another personal example: Sr. attorney but was asked to delay receiving pay so that the men could get paid first. Also, one day all the men in the firm ordered in food for lunch and told the women they could have the leftovers and also expected the women to clean up the mess. A judge called her “Lewinsky” in open court.

-This discrimination against women still exists today because women don’t have the same opportunities as men and are often left out of important decisions. Female attorneys often do not speak up about this discrimination because they fear it will impact their cases. Absorb it. Can’t fight every battle.

Does the “old boys club” still exist?

-Yes. While interviewing a new associate, was offended by a male attorney in her firm. Was told to put up with the environment or be left out.

What has allowed the glass ceiling to exist?

-Clients need jobs desperately. If challenge system, risk losing their jobs. Difficult to prove. Despite rumors, women don’t just want spending money. Afraid because of fear of isolation from coworkers. Humiliated in hostile work environment: women try to control their own conduct, is damaging to their work. Glass ceiling can be hostile work environment; try to make themselves ugly.

Have women been forced to act more “like men” to get ahead?

-Some women do. Does it work or do they just think it does?

-Masculinist model. Can lose jobs because of acting “male”: called abrasive, obnoxious. Men act the same and are assertive. Stereotyping: want you to be feminine, but then you’re not “strong.”

Have you felt you had to act or dress differently than your male colleagues to get the respect you deserve?

-Very conscious of dress. Most female attorneys wear skirts and heels. Ronnie refuses but knows she sticks out. Has been told that judges expect female attorneys to wear skirts. Chairs in court are made for men and as a short woman, skirts won’t do. Women change

pieces of themselves to fit stereotypes. There is more lack of respect for women in business casual than for men.

- People mistake her for office staff—ask her when the attorney will be in because they expect a man.

- Has been told to act more feminine.

Have you ever felt the need to “flaunt your femininity” to get ahead?

- Stereotypes are supposed to be written all over you. Some women are proud to flaunt femininity. Example of a woman who was thrilled to get hired at a firm, not realizing that she was only hired to be a female sitting next to a male client in a sex discrimination case to try to influence the perception.

Is it necessary for a woman who desires to achieve to abandon goals of marriage and family?

- Depends on where you work. Workplace modeled after a male role—not intended to provide time for children, family. Out of necessity, women may find the need to forego marriage and family. Easier for a man to find a woman to take care of family responsibility than vice versa. Family should be a part of the work world. No clear lines should be drawn.

- Some men think women should be married and have children, so those without may be viewed differently.

How do women who have already obtained success treat other women on their way?

- Competition and camaraderie. There are women helping other women consciously—feminists. Others simply stick together in the workplace, lots of male bashing. This is although unhealthy.

- Sometimes a fear that helping other women will cause you to lose your own job.

- Majority of women have incorporated stereotypes. Give males more respect and authority.

- Women are competitive with one another when the power comes from men. Some women are pleased to see other women find success.

What do you see for the future for women in business?

- Would like to think it would get better, but not optimistic. Things are better than they were. Appointment of another conservative judge to the Supreme Court could mean the end of reproductive rights for women.

- We live in a prudish era despite what we may think. Not as much freedom as we think. Not much better off than our sisters before us.

- Once you see the glass ceiling, it's clearly there. We know it's there, but there isn't a word for it. So we just nod and smile, which diminishes our ability to deal with it.

Is the glass ceiling obvious?

- It's complicated. Not blatant, but it's still there. Many people don't see it, but clear sexism exists. Barriers won't be broken down in her lifetime, won't be broken down until men have babies.

- Coin sorter, men and women fall into certain categories.

- If people don't want to see it, there is no hope. Anti-feminists embrace stereotyped roles. Have power to affect politics, get this power off the shirttails of men in power.

- Equality for everyone, some women don't even want this.

## Appendix G

### Vickie

Interview with Vickie Robinson

Interview date: Monday, December 9, 2002

Brief notes from interview.

To what extent do you believe the “glass ceiling” exists for women?

-In the early nineties, this subject was on the radar screen. Seems that now, don't hear much about it. Gone, but not forgotten; forgotten, but not gone.

-Personal examples:

Wanted to become a high school principal at a time when the profession was made up of only 5% women. Heard comments like, “You're such a good teacher, why leave the classroom?” “Do you really think you're capable?” “As a single mom with two kids, how do you think you're going to be able to do this?” “How are you going to be a principal and a mom?” “How are you going to handle discipline?”

Pay issue. Assume husband brings in primary income.

Do you think men believe the glass ceiling still exists?

-Depends on the man. Depends on experiences of his wife/daughter/mother. Some men very supportive. Seems like whenever a job gets tough or status isn't that great or the pay isn't that great, then they'll let the women in.

What has allowed the glass ceiling to exist?

-Lack of mentoring. Idea among women that, “I made it, now you can make it on your own too.” Jealousy issues.

-Theory: men, through sports, grew up learning to be team players, network. Through the emergence of women's sports, this will happen for us too. Generalization

Does the “old boy's club” still exist?

-Yes. Women can be in it, but on the edge. Perhaps only with some of the men, not the whole group. Getting weaker but still there. Networking, sports.

-When women step out of the workforce to have children, lose networks.

Have women been forced to act more like men to get ahead?

-When women are assertive, aggressive—labeled bitch.

-Use strengths of womanhood to get ahead: caring, nurturing. People skills are being promoted in business and education.

-Successful women have same characteristics as successful men (caring, nurturing).

-Women of her generation conditioned to sacrifice, become mothers. Bring this into the workplace (Let things slide—If the org. doesn't have enough money to give me a raise, that's ok.) Shaped to believe that had to work harder than the boys to be successful.

Have you felt you had to act or dress differently in order to get respect?

-Men can get by with being more casual. Women generally need to wear power suits, or the color red.



-When wear a suit in a group of strangers, feels people think she's credible. Has confidence, people will want to pay attention.

Is a woman in business casual perceived differently than a woman in a suit?

-Would hate for women to think they always had to wear a suit. But appearances have powerful implications. Nonverbal communication. Need to be conscious about their appearance. Need to remember to be somewhat conservative.

Have you ever felt the need to "flaunt your femininity" or "flirt with the male ego" to get what you want or deserve?

-It's human nature to like to have people with which you can have fun exchanges. The line is tricky. People have implied that the reason she's gotten things in her career is because of relationships with men in power.

-Sometimes being nice and caring can be interpreted as flirting. If come into an office full of women and the men like you, you become a threat to the other women. They may not help you to acclimate yourself, get ahead.

Is it necessary for a woman who desires to achieve to abandon goals of marriage and family?

-Leaving and reentering the workforce is different for women. Previously conditioned to see the role of mother, only. Then in the sixties got new ideas. So we took on the superwoman role and tried to do it all. This isn't possible. Some businesses are beginning to help with alternative scheduling, half time schedules.

-Personally, if were still married, would not have gotten doctorate, traveled, achieved all she has.

Have women who have quit their jobs to have children made success harder for the rest of us?

-No. Employment laws. Increase of men taking maternity leave. Have made progress.

-The scary thing is, what is the societal cost? Are our kids being neglected? May be a class issue- stories are different for lower, middle, and upper class.

Does a woman with a family earn the same respect as a single woman with only her career in mind?

-Couple of forces.

-People who have families think single women are missing out. Others wish they could be single too and focus on their career.

-Couldn't have gotten where she's at if still married. Social obligations would have gotten in the way. Allows more time to work, only has to take care of herself.

-Once families are raised, there are alternatives. Commuter marriages.

-No resentment of kids down the line. As you get older, put life in perspective. Drive for success isn't as important. Figure out what's really important.

How do women who have already obtained success treat other women on their way?

-Competition, jealousy. But, two of her mentors were women. A mentor is someone who sees more in you than you see in yourself and is willing to take you beyond where they are.

-Hopes that she can pass that same support onto other women. However, in talking with other women, its not that way. Hidden rules are not shared with women; forced to find out the hard way.

Do you think women at the top are reluctant to help other women who wish to attain the same?

-“I made it the hard way, you should too.” Fear that if I help you, you might get better than me. Hopes that this is on the way out.

Would you rather have a male superior or a female superior?

-Doesn't matter. Wants a boss who is ethical, people person with goals and vision. Doesn't matter if it's a man or a woman.

-There is the idea that men don't like to work for women. But, men may actually end up happier with a female boss.

What do you see in the future for women?

-Big picture: want men and women to be human beings. But would hate to eliminate masculine/feminine traits. Hope women continue to be women, keep traditional values. Would like society to realize that feminine traits are as valuable as masculine traits. Slow process.

Do we as women value our feminine traits?

-3 traits to describe self: caring, driven, pragmatic.

Other future issues:

-Women won't be out of the loop but will create the loop. But bringing in too many women will raise eyebrows and men will feel discriminated against. The Female Mafia.

-Men and women will hopefully value each other. Offset each others strengths and weaknesses.



## Appendix H

### Karen

Interview with Karen Blount  
January 25, 2003

Megan: To what extent do you believe the “glass ceiling” exists for women in business?

Karen: Yes it still exists, at least to a certain extent. I don’t think its as bad as it was 20 years ago, but its still there.

Megan: Personal examples?

Karen: I have some examples from 20 years ago but not from today. In the insurance field, top positions go either to white males with MBAs or to actuaries. The reason that perpetuates, in my opinion, is that it’s a social thing. They’re comfortable with other white males. They go golfing together, etc, so they develop this sort of bond. They are less comfortable with women. Some of them may also have stereotypes about women, like that we’re just nurturers, and that all we care about is feelings. Right now at CUNA there are six top dogs and only one of them is a woman, and that’s a recent addition.

For an example from 20 years ago, our company used to have an annual summertime male-only golf outing. Then our company president made waves when he said that if it was going to be a company sponsored golf outing, it had to include women. A lot of the men were angry. The good old boys went ahead and did their own golf outing on their own and just didn’t call it company sponsored. After awhile the whole thing sort of died. It didn’t last long after women were allowed.

Megan: Do you think men believe that the “glass ceiling” still exists?

Karen: I think they probably think they’re being discriminated against, not necessarily that they have a glass ceiling. But if you look at about any company, the top dogs are still white men. The discrimination for women still remains at the top, at the bottom layers it might be the other way around.

Megan: What do you think has allowed the glass ceiling to continue to exist?

Karen: Attitudes and people’s own perceptions. Culture and social norms are a lot of it. The expectation that men should make more. Women sometimes don’t even have the expectations of themselves that they can do it. They have been brought up to believe that they can’t be the primary wage earners.

Until the idea that women should be the caregivers changes, we will never break through the glass ceiling. This creates women who try to do it all and end up frazzeled, feeling guilty, etc.

Megan: Have women been forced to act more “like men” to get ahead?

Karen: Yes, the typical male attributes of decision maker, power-driven, etc. Maybe it’s not even a matter of acting more like men but rather allowing those traditionally “male” qualities in ourselves, that have possibly existed within us for some time, to come to the surface. The nice thing is that for women who do bring forward those skills, although they may have been

subdued, but we also have a nice blend with the traditional female attributes. We can think about the people side of issues too. Women are typically harder workers, I don't care what anybody says. We are the better multi-taskers because we've had to be.

Megan: Have you ever felt like you had to dress differently than men?

Karen: Yes, you could never dress "frilly." You always had to wear a suit. But even now, with business casual, women are expected to dress a notch higher than the men. You see men wearing khakis and a polo, but women will wear tailored pants and a jacket. I don't know if its expected or not, but the women don't dress as casual.

Megan: Do you think that could be because we feel we won't be considered as professional if we dress down to the level that the men do.

Karen: Yes, men don't feel that way because they've always had the respect, its never been a matter of dress. And I think that's why women don't dress as casual as they do.

Megan: Do you think its necessary for a woman who desires to achieve, to the extent that her male counterparts have, to abandon goals of marriage and family?

Karen: No, but I think she needs to make sure she selects a husband who will share her view on that. A husband who takes an equal amount of responsibility for the children, etc. I would say not to rush into kids right away. I think it would probably be easier not to be married, but I don't think that means it should be avoided at all costs. I've seen too many young people get married who are both off on their own career paths and then they have children and what happens to the woman's career? Ended.

Megan: Have women who have quit their jobs to have children made it harder for the rest of us?

Karen: I don't know. Hopefully there are enough women who don't do that so that its not just a given. I don't think so. I think that its more of a norm for a woman to stay in the workforce than not.

Megan: Why do you think it is that you hear stories about a woman who has a baby and decides that being with that baby means more than work and so she quits. Or for whatever reason she can't strike a good balance between work and family and she quits. But how come you never hear the same about a father?

Karen: I think men just don't have those same feelings of maternal instincts and responsibility for the child. Even now, my female coworkers are often the ones who stay home with their children when sick, not the husbands. And to tell you the truth, when you were little and sick I wanted to stay home with you. I wouldn't have felt right if I didn't. I don't think men feel that way.

Megan: Do you think that woman with a family earns the same respect as a single woman?

Karen: It depends on what kind of support she has and how well she can balance. It depends on whether or not she can give the same amount of dedication to her work that the men do.

Megan: How do women who have already obtained success treat other women who are on their way?

Karen: I think there's quite a bit of camaraderie. I think that's good. We should want to help other women. If a woman has already made it, what does she have to lose? And she

would actually benefit from other successful women because she wouldn't have to carry the whole load by herself.

Megan: Has another woman in your profession ever given you advice on how to succeed?

Karen: Well, when I started out there were only a token few women in top positions. But several of them were helpful.

Megan: What do you see for the future?

Karen: I think it should be getting better. I think societal views are changing. Overall, I think we're headed in the right direction. Will we ever totally be without it? Not in my lifetime for sure. Societal roles change too slowly. Its definitely an interesting topic.